



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 51

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 20, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

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OR, BEATING THE REDCOATS AT THEIR OWN GAME.

By HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

THE BOY SPY.

It was the afternoon of an early spring day in the year 1778.

A youth of perhaps nineteen years was riding along a road leading toward Philadelphia.

The youth was dressed in citizen's clothes, but there was an air about him which bespoke the soldier, to one who was a close observer.

And he was a soldier.

He was one of the best and bravest soldiers of the patriot army.

More, he was famed as a scout and spy.

In fact, young as he was, he had done such wonderful work for the patriot cause, in the way of venturing within the enemy's lines, and playing the part of a spy that he had been given the name of "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

For this youth riding along the highway was no other than Dick Slater—scout, spy, soldier and captain of the company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

And Dick was bound for Philadelphia for the purpose of trying to learn the plans of General Howe, the British commander-in-chief.

Howe and the British army had occupied Philadelphia all winter, while the patriot army had been encamped at Valley Forge.

Why Howe had not attacked the patriot army when, in the winter, with half the army ill and unable to fight, he could have wiped it out of existence, was a mystery.

General Washington had lived in constant expectation of an attack, and had kept Dick and a young friend of his named Bob Estabrook at work keeping watch upon Philadelphia almost constantly during the winter, and now that spring had come, the commander-in-chief was sure that Howe would make an attempt to crush the patriot army.

Wishing to have advance knowledge of the attempt, if it was to be made, he had sent Dick upon this expedition.

Dick had been to Philadelphia so often that he was perfectly familiar with the road.

He rode along thinking deeply.

He was thinking of his mother and sister—and Bob Estabrook's sister, his sweetheart—away up in New York State, and wondering when he should see them again.

Presently he sighed, and dismissed the matter from his mind.

He realized that it only made him feel worse to think of his loved ones, so he turned his thoughts upon the work in hand.

"Surely General Howe will make an attack on our army at an early day," he thought. "He has been in Philadelphia doing nothing save have a good time for months, and he will wish to do something to set himself right with King George."

Onward the youth rode.

He was going at a leisurely gait, for he had plenty of time.

He did not wish to reach the city before dark.

He would not dare try to enter Philadelphia in the daytime.

He would have to run the gauntlet of sentinels galore, and would no doubt be taken before General Howe or some of the other high officers, and put through a rigid cross-examination.

Dick was not eager to be put to such an ordeal.

He preferred to enter the city by stealth, after night-fall.

This was much the easier and simpler way.

It was safer, too.

Dick now entered the wide stretch of timber which lay to the west of Schuylkill River.

He let his horse drop into a walk.

He had time a-plenty, and to spare.

He would, indeed, have to kill time, or he would reach Philadelphia before dark.

The road crooked and turned, and wound hither and thither in a very devious way.

Suddenly, as Dick rode around a bend in the road he came face to face with four redcoats.

They raised their muskets instantly, and called out:
 "Halt! or you are a dead man!"

CHAPTER II.

THE RECOGNITION.

Dick was taken by surprise.

He had not expected to encounter any redcoats on the west side of the river.

However, there the redcoats were, and he would have to make the best of it.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

As he spoke he brought his horse to a stop.

"What does it mean?"

"Yes."

"It means that you must give an account of yourself."

"Oh!"

The redcoats advanced till they were within a few feet of Dick.

"Who are you?" asked the leader of the redcoats.

"Who am I?"

"That is what I asked."

"My name is Martin Wilmot."

"Martin Wilmot, eh?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"Five miles back in the country."

"Humph! Where are you going?"

"To Philadelphia."

"What for?"

"I am going on business; my father sent me."

"Oh! What is your father—loyalist or rebel?"

"Oh, he's a loyalist. He's loyal to the king."

"He is, eh?"

"Yes."

"You are sure of that?"

"Oh, yes; I've heard him say so many a time."

"You have?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph!"

The redcoats looked at one another inquiringly.

They seemed puzzled.

They did not know what action to take regarding Dick.

"What shall we do with the young fellow?" asked the leader of the party presently.

The other three shook their heads.

"I don't know," replied one.

"Nor I," from another.

The third said nothing.

"You say your father is a loyalist," said the leader, "but how about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm a loyalist, too."

Dick did not hesitate to dodge the truth, when the good of the great cause was at stake.

The redcoats were puzzled.

They looked at one another in an undecided manner.

They were like the man who drew the elephant in the lottery; they had this youth in their power, but they didn't know what to do with him.

Dick saw their indecision and spoke up:

"Please, sirs, will you let me go on my way? My brother is sick, and one of the things that is taking me to Philadelphia is to secure the services of a doctor."

"You didn't seem in very great haste," said the leader, somewhat ironically; "you were riding in a walk when we first saw you."

"I had been riding at a rapid gait for quite a distance, and was letting my horse rest a bit."

"He doesn't look tired."

"He never does, even when ready to drop."

At this instant the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and a moment later another party of four redcoats rode around a bend and came galloping toward the party of five.

At the head of this second party rode a captain, as Dick knew by his uniform.

He rode right up alongside the four who had stopped Dick, and reining up his horse, addressed the leader of the four:

"What have you here, Liscomb?"

"I don't really know, Captain," was the reply; "he says he lives back in the country, and that his father is a loyalist, but, of course, he may be lying."

The captain turned his eyes on Dick, and surveyed him in a searching manner.

Dick met the redcoat's gaze unflinchingly; but at the same time he had an uncomfortable feeling, for he believed that he had seen the captain before.

The fear was upon him that the captain might have seen his face at some time, and might recognize him.

His fear was presently realized, for the captain suddenly slapped his thigh with his hand, and cried out exultantly:

"By all that is wonderful, boys, you have made an important capture! This young fellow is Dick Slater, the notorious rebel spy!"

CHAPTER III.

UP A TREE.

But Dick was not yet captured.

True, he was outnumbered nine to one, and it would seem as if he had no chance whatever to escape, but he was a youth who never gave up, and even though the chances all seemed against him, he was determined that he would not be taken without a struggle.

When the captain cried out that the redcoats had made an important capture, and that the youth was Dick Slater, the attention of the four soldiers was for the moment turned toward the officer.

Their attention was taken off Dick.

It was only for a moment, but it was sufficient for Dick's purpose.

He seized upon the moment as the time to make the attempt to escape.

He drove the cruel spurs into the flanks of his horse.

The animal, angered by this unexpected treatment, and snorting with pain, leaped wildly forward.

Dick guided the horse right through between two of the redcoats, and as he went through he struck out with his fists and knocked both men off their horses.

Their animals then began leaping and plunging, and amid the confusion Dick rode onward up the road.

Dick drew a pair of pistols, and turning in his saddle, first one way, then the other, fired two shots back at the redcoats.

He succeeded in bringing one of the men down.

This, of course, added to the confusion, and before the astonished redcoats could get disentangled and straightened out, Dick had disappeared around the bend in the road.

He knew the redcoats would give chase, however, and not wishing to be forced to ride onward toward the city at a rapid gait, he turned aside and rode into the timber.

He had gone not more than fifty yards when he heard the redcoats come dashing around the bend in the road.

There was a straight stretch ahead for a distance of half a mile at least, and the redcoats knew that Dick had not had time to reach the next bend and get out of sight.

"He has entered the timber!" Dick heard one of the redcoats cry out.

"Right," was the reply; "let's follow him!"

"Of course we'll follow him!" cried another angry voice.

"We will follow him to the jumping-off place but what we capture the scoundrel. Into the timber, men, and

spread out, so as to prevent his doubling back and getting into the road!"

"They are angry on account of letting me slip through their fingers," thought Dick; "well, I will give them a merry chase, before I will let them catch me."

Dick rode onward through the timber at as rapid a pace as was possible.

The youth had been reared in a timbered country, and was at home in the woods.

He doubted the ability of the redcoats to follow faster than he could make his way through the timber.

The redcoats were wild with rage, however, and were so eager to capture the youth who had slipped through their fingers so neatly in the first instance, that they took desperate chances and forced their horses through the timber at a rapid pace.

Dick soon realized that the redcoats were actually gaining on him.

"This will never do!" he said to himself. "I must not permit the redcoats to travel faster than myself. They would certainly have cause to congratulate themselves if they should succeed in catching me after the start I have secured."

Dick urged his horse onward.

Suddenly he noticed that the animal was limping.

"Jove! that is bad," thought Dick; "he must have injured his shoulder when he bumped against the horses of the redcoats, back yonder. I fear I shall be overtaken, after all."

Dick tried to get better speed out of the horse, but the poor brute grew more lame every instant.

The pursuing redcoats drew nearer and nearer.

Dick could hear their voices as they called out to each other.

The youth realized that he would be unable to escape if he stuck to his horse, so he decided to dismount and trust to escaping afoot.

He quickly leaped to the ground, and striking the horse a sharp blow on the flank, urged the poor brute onward.

The horse went but a few yards and stopped.

It was evidently torture to him to use the lame limb.

Dick heard the redcoats coming.

They were close at hand.

It would not do to wait longer.

If he were to do so he would surely be captured.

Suddenly an idea occurred to the youth.

Why not climb a tree?

He thought this would be the best and easiest way to escape from the redcoats.

He would try it, anyway.

No sooner thought of than put into execution.

Dick climbed a large tree, which stood near at hand.

He had scarcely more than gotten well up in the tree before the redcoats put in an appearance.

They caught sight of the horse.

Exclamations of surprise escaped them.

"There's his horse!"

"What does it mean?"

"Where is he?"

The redcoats halted beneath the tree in which Dick had taken refuge.

They dismounted, and one went and caught the horse and led him back to where his companions were.

He quickly noticed that the animal was lame.

He could not well help noticing it, seeing that the horse was so lame he could hardly walk.

The redcoats understood the matter now.

They knew why the youth had abandoned his horse.

They decided that as Dick was on foot they would stand a better chance to catch him if they went on foot, and they tied their horses and set out in search of the fugitive.

When they had gone Dick slipped down out of the tree.

He made his way to the nearest horse and was in the act of untying the halter strap when he was startled by hearing a wild yell right behind him.

He whirled and saw one of the redcoats standing within ten feet of him.

The fellow held a pistol in his hand and the weapon covered Dick.

The yell had been uttered as a warning to his comrades that the fugitive had been found.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONE-MAN CHARGE.

Dick was taken by surprise, but he was not yet ready to give up.

He was determined that he would not allow himself to be captured.

Stooping quickly he darted under the horse, and darting to the next nearest animal he drew his knife, cut the halter strap, and bounding into the saddle, urged the horse away at as fast a pace as possible.

Dick's quick eyes had discerned a sort of road through the timber, or he would not have mounted the horse.

The road was quickly reached and then the horse was urged into a gallop.

Crack! went the redcoat's pistol.

The bullet did no damage, however, and Dick continued on his way.

The redcoat set up a terrible yelling, and speedily brought his comrades to the spot.

When they learned what had occurred, the redcoats were very angry; and mounting their horses they rode in pursuit of the fugitive.

It was a lively chase.

Dick had succeeded in securing one of the best of the redcoats' horses, however, and his pursuers were unable to gain on him.

The road which Dick was following bent around to the left, gradually, and finally the youth decided that he had made almost a complete circuit and was going in the opposite direction from what he had been going at first.

The road was really a large loop, and presently Dick had the satisfaction of hearing the redcoats going along the road not a hundred yards distant from him.

They were going in the opposite direction and were talking loudly and telling what they would do when they caught the "rebel."

"You'll have to catch him first, though, my friends!" murmured Dick, grimly.

Then an idea struck him.

Why not play a trick on his enemies?

He decided to do it.

Turning his horse's head toward the left, Dick rode into the timber and across the neck of the loop until he reached the road over which he had ridden a few minutes before.

He was now behind the redcoats instead of in front of them.

He struck out after them.

He rode onward and was soon close enough so that he could hear the voices of the redcoats.

Dick chuckled when he thought of what a neat trick he had played the redcoats.

They thought they were pursuing him, when in reality he was chasing them.

The British soldiers were surprised when they discovered that the road made the turn.

They increased the speed of their horses.

Dick increased the speed of his horse, also, and kept at just about the same distance behind, all the time—just close enough so that he could hear the men's voices.

Presently Dick brought his horse to a stop, suddenly.

He had come to a clearing.

At the farther side of the clearing was a good-sized log cabin.

In front of the cabin were the redcoats, and they were talking to a man—evidently the owner of the cabin.

Dick leaped to the ground, and leading his horse back a ways, tied him to a tree.

Then the youth advanced to the edge of the clearing, and concealing himself behind a tree, watched the scene before him.

The redcoats were talking excitedly and pointing toward the other side of the clearing from where Dick was.

Dick knew they were asking the man if he had seen any one pass, going in the direction indicated by the redcoats.

Dick could see the settler shaking his head, and knew he was saying that he had seen no one pass.

This did not seem to satisfy the redcoats.

They continued to talk in an excited manner, and presently they dismounted; and while one held the horses and another covered the man with a pistol, the remaining redcoats entered the cabin.

"What's the trouble, I wonder?" thought Dick. "I have it! They think the man is trying to shield me and that I have hidden in the house. They are going to search for me."

Suddenly screams were heard.

They were in the tones of a woman, or a girl, or both, and the next instant the redcoats came out of the cabin, dragging a woman and a girl after them.

Dick saw the settler start to turn as if to go to the rescue of the two, but the redcoat with the pistol evidently said something threatening, for the man remained where he was.

Dick's blood boiled.

The redcoats, angered at not finding the youth for whom they were seeking, thought that they could force the woman or girl to reveal his whereabouts.

Dick could hear the angry tones of the redcoats' voices, but could not distinguish the words spoken.

Dick judged that the woman and girl were the man's wife and daughter; and in this he was right.

He was also right in supposing that the redcoats were trying to frighten the two into telling the whereabouts of the youth whom they were seeking.

Of course, the woman and girl had not seen Dick, and could not reveal his whereabouts; and their denials that they knew only made the redcoats the more angry.

"I'll tell you what let's do," said one of the men, presently, "let's tie the man up and give him a good thrashing. I think it won't take long to get the truth out of him or out of one of these stubborn hussies!"

The other redcoats hailed the suggestion with delight, and the settler was bound to a tree which stood in front

of the house, and then one of the men took off his belt, and, holding to one end of it, struck the settler a strong blow across the back.

He kept this up, striking one blow after another, and Dick could stand the sight no longer.

The woman and girl had kept on begging the redcoats not to flog the husband and father, but the fiends paid no attention to the pleading of the two, and Dick decided to take a hand.

He felt that it was no more than right that he should do so, as it was really on his account that the people were in trouble.

There were six of the redcoats, three of the original nine being missing.

Dick judged that he had wounded or killed one, and that the others were with the wounded man.

He believed he could put the six to flight.

He would try, at any rate.

He hastily mounted his horse, and then drawing two pistols, rode across the clearing at a gallop.

The redcoats heard the hoofbeats, and turned to see who was coming.

As they turned, Dick cried out:

"Get, you scoundrels, or you are dead men! Run for your lives!"

The redcoats, taken by surprise, turned and fled at the top of their speed.

Crack! Crack!

CHAPTER V.

NOT YET OUT OF THE WOODS.

Dick had fired.

He did not try to kill either of the fleeing men.

He had a decided aversion to shooting men in the back.

One of the bullets must have struck a redcoat, however, for one of the fugitives gave utterance to a terrible yell, and ran faster than ever.

The redcoats disappeared within the edge of the timber, and Dick leaped to the ground, after bringing his horse to a stop, and cut the bonds binding the man to the tree.

"Who are you?" the man asked

"I am the person who got you into trouble; so I thought it my duty to get you out," said Dick, with a smile. "I am the person they were hunting."

"Waal, et looked jes' now ez ef you wuz a-huntin' uv them!" he remarked.

"Yes, but they are liable to come back at any moment, and turn the tables on me. I must be going."

"Come into the cabin," invited the settler; "together we kin lick 'em. They kinder took me by s'prise afore, er they wouldn't hev got ther best uv me so easy."

The woman and the girl added their entreaties to those of the man, and Dick decided to stop at the cabin, and in case the redcoats returned help the settler in beating the enemy off.

He tied his horse to the tree, and did the same with the other horses.

Then he accompanied the settler and his wife and daughter into the cabin.

There were peep-holes through which they could look from every side of the cabin, and they kept a sharp lookout for the redcoats.

Presently they saw their enemies.

The redcoats were approaching the cabin, but very slowly and cautiously.

When they were within a hundred feet of the cabin, Dick called out:

"Halt ! Stop where you are, unless you wish to have your carcasses punctured by bullets!"

The redcoats came to a stop very promptly.

Then one displayed a white handkerchief, as a flag of truce.

"Well, what do you want?" called out Dick.

"We want our horses," was the reply; "if you will let us take them, we will agree to go away and not molest you any further."

"You may have all the horses save one," replied Dick; "you were the cause of my horse being lamed, and I am going to have one of yours in exchange. Leave the one I rode here, and take the others. Mind, if you try to take that horse, I will shoot some of you down! I shall have my eyes on you."

"Oh, we won't try any tricks. We'll leave the horse."

"See that you do."

The redcoats quickly secured their horses, and mounting rode away, seemingly glad to get away so easily.

"Do you suppose they have gone for good?" asked the girl, in an anxious voice.

"I think so," replied Dick; "I believe that they have had enough of it, for the present, at least. They may lie in wait for me, but I don't think they will return and bother you folks."

"You will have to be careful," the girl said.

"Ye hed better stay over night with us," invited the man.

"We'll be glad ter hev ye," said the woman.

But Dick shook his head.

"The best I can do is to remain and take supper with you," he said; "then I will have to travel onward."

"Them redcoats said ez how ye wuz er patriot spy," the man said; "is thet so?"

Dick smiled.

"And if I am?" he queried.

"Then ye've got er good frien' in Martin Murray—wich is me. I'm er patriot through an' through."

"I am glad to hear that," said Dick; "and such being the case, I don't mind acknowledging that I am a patriot spy."

"An' yer name?"

"Dick Slater."

The man started.

"Ye don't mean et!" he cried. "Air ye ther young feller what hez made himself so famous all along uv his playin' ther spy on ther British?"

Dick smiled.

"I have done considerable work in that line," he replied modestly.

"Waal, I'm glad ter know ye; I am so! Old woman git up ther very bes' supper thet ye kin fur this heer young man."

"I'll do thet, Martin," was the reply.

She began work at once, and did get up a good supper, sure enough.

Dick enjoyed the meal immensely, and the fact that pretty Mabel Murray sat opposite him, and saw that he got plenty to eat did not lessen the enjoyment in the least.

After supper, Dick bade the three good-by, and mounting his horse rode away.

The settler had told Dick that it was only about a quarter of a mile to the main road leading to Philadelphia, and the youth had no fear but what he could find the way.

The only fear he had was that the redcoats would lie in wait for him, somewhere along the road.

This was a risk he was forced to take, however.

Dick held the reins in his left hand, and a pistol in his right.

He was determined that, if the redcoats attacked him, he would get in at least one shot on them.

Onward he rode.

He was not long in reaching the main road.

He had not been attacked, and as he rode into the main road he drew a breath of relief.

"I guess I am safe," he thought. "The redcoats went on to Philadelphia after all."

But he was mistaken.

At this instant there was a rush of feet, and several dark forms loomed up close at hand.

"Surrender!" cried a fierce voice. "You are our prisoner!"

CHAPTER VI.

HELPING HUNT FOR HIMSELF.

Dick's answer was in actions, not in words.

He dug his spurs into the flanks of the horse, causing the animal to leap forward with a snort of pain and rage.

At the same instant the youth fired the pistol.

Again had Dick's prompt action frustrated the designs of the redcoats.

The bullet from the pistol wounded one of the men, the horse knocked another down and scattered the rest, and before they could get straightened up, the youth was riding up the road like the wind.

The redcoats mounted their horses as quickly as possible, and gave pursuit, but Dick had such a good start that they could not catch him.

Dick continued onward till he was within half a mile of Philadelphia, and then he turned aside into the timber, and tied his horse.

He walked the rest of the way, and by cutting across lots managed to evade the sentinels and enter the city unchallenged.

Dick had been in the city a number of times, and knew just where to go.

He realized that the redcoats with whom he had had his encounter would soon be in the city with the news that a patriot spy was headed in that direction, and fearing that he might be seen and recognized, he decided to change his costume.

He went to a costumer's where he had had dealings before, and hired a British uniform.

He doffed his old suit, and donning the uniform went out upon the street.

He felt safer now.

He knew that the redcoats would be looking for him among those dressed in citizen's clothes, and the British uniform would, he was confident, throw them off the track.

Presently he came to a crowd which was being harangued by a man standing on an inverted barrel.

Dick recognized the man's voice.

The fellow was the captain who had been with the gang that Dick had had his trouble with that afternoon.

He was telling the crowd that a rebel spy was doubtless in the city, and advising them to be on the lookout for him.

When he told the name of the spy, and the people heard him say that the rebel in question was no other than Dick Slater, there was considerable excitement manifested.

All seemed to have heard of the boy spy.

Wondering exclamations were uttered.

The belief seemed to be general that Dick was in the city.

"Let's divide up into small parties and make search for him!" cried one man.

"That's a good idea!" from another.

The idea seemed to meet with general favor.

The crowd broke up, and dividing into small parties of five or six moved away in various directions.

Dick found himself a member of one of these parties.

He went along, but managed to keep in the rear.

He did not take a prominent part.

He was willing that some of the rest should do this.

He thought that it was quite a good joke, his being a member of a searching party, and helping hunt himself.

He would have to be careful and not assist in finding himself.

By keeping well at the rear of the searching party, Dick did not think he was in much danger of discovery.

There was another fellow who did not seem desirous of taking a prominent part, and he and Dick kept side by side.

They got to talking, and Dick, finding his companion was communicative and evidently wholly unsuspecting, plied him with cautious and shrewdly worded questions which were calculated to draw forth information regarding the British and their plans.

The redcoat gave Dick some information, but not a great deal—which was owing to the fact that he did not know a great deal.

Had he known very much Dick would have become possessed of all the information he wished for.

For an hour at least the party wended its way through the streets of Philadelphia.

The main streets and the side streets alike were searched, but no trace was secured of the rebel spy.

Presently the party met one of the other parties, and the two came to a stop for the purpose of comparing notes.

Dick noticed, with a slight feeling of dismay, that one of the members of the other party was the captain who had recognized him on the road that afternoon.

"Jove, it won't do to let him see me!" the youth thought; "he might not recognize me in this British uniform, but then again he might."

Dick kept well back and managed to keep his face pretty well in the shadow.

To do this he had to keep behind his comrades.

It happened that the fellow behind whom Dick stood, stooped suddenly to tie his shoe, and the captain got a good look at the youth's face.

"Great Scott, men! Here is Dick Slater!" he cried.

CHAPTER VII.

A LIVELY CHASE.

All were amazed.

Perhaps not one, with the exception of the captain, knew who he meant.

They peered about them, expecting to see the patriot spy, not thinking he was among them.

The captain himself, though he had managed to cry out, was for the moment so paralyzed with amazement that he could not move.

Dick took advantage of the opportunity for action, and acted.

The captain had been his Jonah, and he made up his mind to get a little satisfaction out of him, at any rate.

Dick leaped forward.

Out shot his fist.

It landed fair between the captain's eyes.

It was a terrible blow.

Dick had put all his strength into the effort.

The officer was knocked down as if he had been struck by a battering-ram.

He struck the sidewalk with a thud, and lay still.

He was unconscious.

Then Dick dealt the two nearest redcoats blows, and leaped away and ran up the street with all his might.

The redcoats suddenly aroused themselves from the stupor of amazement, and rushed after the fugitive.

They set up a terrible yelling.

"Stop the spy!"

"Stop the rebel!"

"Stop him, somebody!"

But the few people Dick encountered before reaching a cross street were ordinary citizens, and they gave him a clear path and made no effort to stop him.

Dick reached the cross street, and, turning, dashed down it.

After Dick came the redcoats.

They were not yelling now.

They had learned that yelling did no good.

They were buckling down to their work and were holding their own with Dick, though they could not gain.

At the next corner Dick turned to the left—and found himself face to face with a party of at least a dozen redcoats.

Dick was a wonderfully quick-witted youth.

It was this faculty which made it possible for him to get out of tight places with such apparent ease at times.

It stood him in good stead now.

Dick did not falter or hesitate, but rushed right in among the redcoats.

Although surprised by Dick's action, no one laid hands on the youth.

He had on a British uniform, and they thought he was one of them.

Dick had figured on this, and now he cried out:

"Block the way so my pursuers can't get past, fellows! I knocked my captain down, back yonder, and they are after me."

Then Dick rushed onward, the redcoats opening up to let him through.

Then they closed up again, instantly, and got ready to obstruct the passage of the youth's pursuers.

Dick had reckoned shrewdly that they would be willing to aid a comrade in trouble, and it turned out that he was right.

When Dick's pursuers reached the spot where the party of redcoats stood, they found their passage barred.

Those who were befriending Dick got in the way of the others and managed to bring them to a stop.

This angered Dick's pursuers, and some hot words were exchanged.

They came very near getting into a fight, but one of the redcoats who had been in pursuit of Dick managed to make the others understand that the fugitive was a rebel spy in disguise, and then the chase was resumed, all entering it.

The redcoats who had been fooled by Dick were very angry, and were anxious to get hold of the youth.

They would have handled him roughly, no doubt.

But there did not seem to be much chance of at once laying hands on the daring spy.

Dick had made good use of the time gained by beguiling the redcoats into assisting him by detaining his pursuers.

He had got a lead of two blocks, and was out of sight of his pursuers.

The street was not very well lighted, anyway, and it would have been impossible to see any one at a distance of more than half a block.

Dick kept on running and presently found that he was almost at the wharf.

There were coal yards and lumber piles on every hand, and it would be a difficult matter indeed for the redcoats to keep on Dick's track here.

The youth ran along between a long row of lumber piles on either side, and presently came out upon the wharf.

As he did so four roughly dressed men rushed forward and seized Dick.

CHAPTER VIII.

KIDNAPPED.

The youth was taken by surprise.

He struggled fiercely, however.

He was determined that he would not allow himself to be made a prisoner if he could prevent it.

The men were lusty fellows, however, and had succeeded in getting hold of Dick in such fashion that he could not draw his pistols.

They were collectively too strong for him, and although he put up a good fight, he was overpowered; and then the men lifted him bodily and carried him aboard a sailing vessel which lay alongside the wharf.

Dick wondered what this could mean.

He was carried down into the forecabin, and the door was closed and fastened.

Dick looked about him as well as he could by the faint light which came through a small window at the side of the room.

He saw three or four men lying in bunks, and on making closer examination saw that they were redcoats.

They were breathing heavily, and the fumes told the story that the men were in a drunken slumber.

Dick could not understand the affair at all.

Why had he been captured and taken aboard the vessel?

Dick could not even guess.

Suddenly Dick felt the vessel moving.

"Jove! what does that mean?" he said to himself. "The vessel seems to be leaving the wharf."

Could he be starting on a voyage? Dick asked himself.

The thought that such might be the case caused Dick's heart to sink.

What if he were to be taken out to sea.

That would be terrible.

Dick's work lay in Philadelphia.

If he were to be carried away and be unable to do the work which General Washington had sent him to Philadelphia to do, it might be disastrous, for General Washington was, as Dick knew, depending upon him to bring information regarding the intentions of the British.

If General Howe contemplated making an attack upon the patriots at Valley Forge and Dick was carried out to sea and could not warn the commander-in-chief, the result might be disastrous to the patriot cause.

Dick made up his mind that he must escape.

But how was he to do it?

He tried to move the window.

He could not do it.

The window was immovable, being fastened in place by screws.

It consisted of about a single pane of glass, and it was so small that even had Dick broken it out he could not have crawled through the opening.

Then Dick tried the door and found it fastened.

Being thus balked, Dick sat down, determined to take things as easy as possible.

Again the thought came to him: Why had he been made a prisoner and brought aboard the ship?

He could not solve the puzzle.

Presently he heard footsteps on the stairs leading down into the forecabin.

Some one was coming.

"Perhaps I may learn why it was done, now," he thought.

There was a fumbling at the door.

Then the door opened.

A man entered.

He was a rough-looking fellow.

He held a pistol in his hand, and he glared at Dick in a fierce and threatening manner.

Dick thought that the man looked like a pirate.

He met the fellow's fierce glare unflinchingly, however.

"Well, mate, how air ye makin' et?" the sailor—for such the man was—asked, in a hoarse voice.

"I can't say that I am feeling as well as I might," replied Dick. "Why have I been brought aboard this vessel?"

"Well, I'll tell ye, seein' ez how ye air heer, tight an' fast, an' can't git erway, nohow: Ye hev be'n shipped ez er sailor afore ther mast fur er cruise, my hearty!"

"Shipped as a sailor before the mast?"

"Thet's wot I said, my boy."

"Seized and hauled aboard the vessel against my will,

you mean. But I am no sailor; I would be of no use to you."

"Oh, yes; ye kin l'arn, ye know."

"But I protest. I don't wish to go on a cruise."

"P'raps ye don't. Thet don't make no diff'rence, howsumever."

Dick was silent a few moments.

Then he asked:

"Where is this vessel bound for?"

"Africky," was the reply.

"Africa!"

Dick uttered the exclamation in a horrified tone of voice.

The man grinned in a fiendish manner.

"Yes, Africky; whut is thar erbout thet ter make ye yawp out in that fashion?"

"A great deal," replied Dick; "I must not go to Africa!"

"W'y not? Et's closter ter England than Ameriky is."

"I know that; but I don't want to be close to England. I'm an American."

The sailor looked surprised.

Then an incredulous look appeared on his face.

He shook his head.

"Thet story won't do, young feller," he said; "look at yer uniform."

Dick realized that appearances were against him.

He was wearing a British uniform, and the man was not to be blamed for believing him to be a redcoat.

"Would you have taken me prisoner and brought me aboard the ship if you had been sure that I was an American?" asked Dick.

The sailor hesitated.

"Yes," he said, presently, "we would have hauled ye erboard, jes' ther same; though I will acknowlerdge thet we hev er parshality ter redcoats w'en we air pressin' men inter service."

"I beg of you to let me go, sir," said Dick; "I am not only an American, but I am a spy in the service of the commander-in-chief of the patriot army. I was in Philadelphia securing information, and if I do not return to General Washington with the information it may be disastrous for the patriot cause. Set me ashore, if you desire the success of the patriots."

The man hesitated.

"I would think uv et ef I wuz shore ye wuz whut ye say ye air," he said, slowly and hesitatingly; "but I rather think ye air lyin' ter me ter git put ashore, an' I guess I shall hev ter keep ye."

"But, man, I tell you I must not; I cannot make the trip to Africa!"

"Oh, yes, ye kin," with a grin; "ye'll stay right on the heer ship an' make ther trip ter Africky, my boy!"

But Dick did not intend to do anything of the kind.

He was determined to make his escape from the vessel.

While talking to the man, Dick had acted in such manner as to make the fellow think him timid and frightened.

Dick had done this to throw the man off his guard.

Having failed to get the man to set him ashore, Dick was determined to make a break for liberty.

The sailor was a stalwart, heavy-built, strong-looking fellow, but Dick thought that by taking him by surprise, he would be able to upset him and escape from the forecandle.

Dick wished to make his escape as quickly as possible.

Every minute that he delayed would take him farther away from Philadelphia.

Fearing that the sailor might leave the forecandle, Dick decided to act.

The sailor still held the pistol in his hand, but he let the muzzle drop and the weapon was pointing at the floor.

Suddenly Dick leaped forward.

The man attempted to raise the pistol and fire, but did not have time.

Dick's fist shot out.

It struck the man fairly between the eyes.

Down went the fellow with a crash.

Dick leaped over the fallen man, and sprang up the steps leading from the forecandle to the deck.

Just as Dick reached the deck he heard come up an angry roar:

"Stop thet young scoundrel! Shoot him! Kill him! Don't let 'im git erway!"

Dick saw a number of dark forms come rushing towards him.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK ESCAPES FROM THE VESSEL.

Dick realized that he was in great danger.

He saw the flash of weapons.

He did not hesitate an instant.

He dashed across the deck of the ship and leaped over the rail.

As he did so several pistol shots rang out.

As luck would have it, none of the bullets struck Dick. Downward he shot.

Splash!

He went into the water head first, and disappeared beneath the surface.

Dick was an expert swimmer.

He could swim almost as well under the water as on top of it.

Fearing that the men on the ship would fire upon him again if he came up near the vessel, Dick struck out and swam quite a distance underneath the water.

While he was under the water Dick heard faint noises which sounded like the muffled report of pistols, and he did not doubt that the men on the ship were firing into the water and darkness at random.

When Dick came up, he was quite a ways from the vessel, and feeling that he had nothing more to fear from that direction, he turned his attention toward getting ashore.

Dick wished to land on the west shore, and heading in that direction he swam lustily.

His clothing, being soaked with water, seemed to weigh a ton, but Dick was strong, and soon succeeded in reaching the shore.

"Well, I'm good and wet," murmured Dick; "but what matters it? What is a ducking compared with being taken to the coast of Africa? I have escaped, and that is the main thing."

Dick doffed his clothing, and wringing the water out of his garments donned them again.

"There, that feels better," he murmured. "Now, for Philadelphia."

Dick struck out, heading northward up the river.

He wondered how far he was from the city.

There was a good breeze blowing from the north, and he judged that the ship had sailed two or three miles down the river before he had succeeded in escaping.

The cold water and wet clothing had chilled Dick considerably, but by walking briskly he soon got his blood circulating rapidly, and a warm glow went over him.

Dick walked rapidly onward, and at the end of an hour reached the southern suburbs of Philadelphia.

He struck into one of the streets, and walked briskly onward.

As he walked along Dick pondered the situation.

He decided that he must get rid of the British uniform.

The redcoats and Tories would be on the lookout for him in this disguise, and he must discard it.

Dick had some British gold in his pocket, and he de-

cided to enter the first clothing store he came to and purchase a suit of citizen's clothing.

Presently he came to a clothing store.

He entered.

A man came forward to wait upon him.

Dick told the merchant that he wished to purchase a suit of citizen's clothing, as he had fallen in the water and gotten his uniform wet, and the man hastened to show him the clothing.

When he had spread out three or four suits for Dick's inspection, the storekeeper excused himself, and going to where a clerk was at work said in a low, cautious tone:

"Go out and find some British soldiers and bring them here, Harvey; be as quick as you can, for I believe this young fellow that I am showing the clothing to is the rebel spy they have been making such a fuss about tonight."

The clerk nodded, and with a quick glance in Dick's direction, hastened out of the store.

Of course Dick had not heard what the storekeeper said to the clerk, but he was a shrewd youth, and he suspected that something was in the wind.

"I believe that man suspects me," he thought; "in that case, he has probably sent the clerk out with instructions to bring some British soldiers here. If so, they will be here soon, and I must get through and get away quickly."

Dick selected a suit which was about what he wanted, and doffing his wet uniform, he donned the suit.

He had just finished, when into the store rushed half a dozen redcoats, with the clerk bringing up the rear.

"Here is your man!" cried the storekeeper, in a triumphant voice, and he caught Dick by the arm.

CHAPTER X.

RECOGNIZED A SECOND TIME.

But Dick was not to be taken so easily.

While selecting and donning the suit of clothes, he had been using his eyes.

He had taken note of the fact that there was a back door near at hand.

It might be locked, true, but he saw that the key was in the door.

He had already decided that he would make his escape by way of this door, and when the redcoats entered the front door, he acted instantly.

He dealt the over-zealous storekeeper a blow on the jaw.

Down the man went, as if struck with a sledge-hammer.

Dick had put considerable force into the blow.

He owed the merchant something for his trickery, and paid the debt in this manner.

Then Dick bounded to the back door.

It was locked, as he had suspected, but it took him only an instant to turn the key, and then a jerk, and the door was open.

A yell of rage went up from the redcoats when they saw Dick's action.

They quickly drew their pistols.

As Dick leaped out through the open doorway the soldiers fired.

Crash!

The noise made by the discharge of a dozen pistols within the store was something terrific.

When the smoke cleared away the redcoats could see nothing of the fugitive.

They rushed forward eagerly.

They hoped to find the body of the spy lying in the backyard.

They were disappointed.

The spy was not there.

With shouts of rage and disappointment, the redcoats leaped through the doorway, and set out in pursuit of the fugitive.

They felt sure that he must be wounded.

In that case they would soon overtake him.

They ran onward several blocks, but did not succeed in catching sight of the fugitive.

At last they gave it up, and made their way back to the store.

The clerk had just succeeded in bringing the storekeeper to.

The latter, when he learned that the spy had escaped, was wild with rage.

He raved and almost tore his hair.

"And he succeeded in getting off with one of the best suits of clothes in the house!" he cried in a mournful tone.

Then a thought struck him, and he told the soldiers they ought to pay him for the clothing.

They laughed at him.

"Oh, no! We couldn't think of such a thing!" they said.

This made the storekeeper more angry than ever.

He called the soldiers names, and said that henceforth the British might look out for themselves, and capture their spies unaided by him.

The redcoats laughed at him, and finally put a stop to

his talking by threatening to turn his establishment upside down.

Finally the redcoats took their departure, and when they had gone the storekeeper looked at his clerk and said:

"Harvey, I'm a fool!"

The two were standing near the back of the store, and as the man said this a voice answered promptly:

"You are right; you are the biggest kind of a fool!"

The man and his clerk looked around, with exclamations of amazement—to see their late customer standing before them.

"You here!" exclaimed the storekeeper.

"Great guns!" from the clerk.

"Yes, I am here," replied Dick coolly. "You see, I hadn't paid you for this suit, and as I am an honest man I could not go away without doing so."

Both men stared.

The cool youth was a surprise and puzzle to them.

"Were you not hit by some of the bullets fired at you?" asked the clerk.

Dick shook his head.

"Not one of the bullets touched me," he replied.

"But where did you go? How did you escape being seen by the soldiers?"

"That was easy enough. The instant I leaped through the doorway, I turned aside and entered your wood-house and closed the door. When the redcoats came rushing out they thought, of course, that I had taken flight, and they ran several blocks, trying to get sight of me."

"And you were in the wood-house all the time?"

"Yes."

"Weren't you afraid they would look there for you?"

"Oh, no; they thought I was half a mile away, and still running, so there was no reason why they should look into the wood-house."

The man and his clerk uttered exclamations of admiration.

They could not help it.

This cool youth was a revelation to them.

Dick eyed the two searchingly.

"I suppose there is no danger that you will try to bring the redcoats in upon me again?" he queried.

Both shook their heads.

"You need have no fear on that score," said the storekeeper; "I am done. The British soldiers will have to do their own work, hereafter. They can count upon no further assistance from me."

"That is sensible," said Dick; "well, how much do I owe you for this suit?"

The man named a price, and Dick took the gold out of the pocket of the uniform and paid the score.

Then at his request the uniform was wrapped up and with it under his arm Dick walked out of the store.

As he stepped out upon the sidewalk he came face to face with the captain who had recognized him in the first place, that day, and who had caused him all the trouble which he had undergone.

The captain gave utterance to a wild yell, and seized Dick.

CHAPTER XI.

SURPRISED IN HIS ROOM.

"I have you now!" he cried.

But he was mistaken.

Dick was wide awake and ready for anything.

Although taken by surprise he was not disconcerted.

Out shot his fist.

Crack!

The fist struck the British officer fair between the eyes.

It was a terrific stroke.

With a cry of pain the captain fell to the sidewalk.

Of course, the encounter and the captain's yell had attracted attention and people were running toward the spot.

Even the storekeeper and his clerk came running to the door of the store.

They more than half expected to see the strange youth mixed up in another difficulty.

Their expectations were realized.

They reached the door just in time to see Dick leap over the body of the British captain and dart away down the street.

A redcoat got in Dick's way, and, with drawn pistol, ordered the youth to halt.

Dick's answer was to dash the bundle of clothing—the redcoat uniform—into the man's face.

The fellow fired the pistol, but the bundle, striking him in the face at the same instant, disconcerted him so that the bullet did not come anywhere near Dick.

In fact, it went nearly straight upward and just missed the head of a curious citizen who was peering out of an upstairs window.

The man got his head back out of sight in a hurry.

Dick followed up his advantage.

The man who had been struck in the face by the bundle had staggered backward and Dick leaped quickly forward

and dealt him a severe blow before he could get straightened up, with the result that the fellow went into the gutter on his head and shoulders.

Dick's farther advance in this direction was barred, however, by a squad of redcoats.

Behind him, too, a crowd was gathering and it looked as if he was in for it.

He was between two fires.

Dick was not one who gave up easily, however.

After knocking the redcoat with the pistol into the gutter, Dick turned and faced in the other direction.

The captain was just struggling to his feet.

He was roaring out curses and threats, and trying to draw a pistol.

Dick leaped forward and knocked the officer down again.

Then he bounded toward the door opening into the store where he had bought his suit.

The storekeeper and clerk were standing in the doorway.

"Back!" cried Dick, threateningly. "Back, or it will be the worse for you!"

The two had seen enough of Dick to know that he meant what he said.

The speed with which they leaped back out of the way would have been ludicrous to see under ordinary circumstances.

Dick leaped through the doorway and then slammed the door shut and bolted it.

"Don't you dare open that door!" he called out, sternly; and then he raced through the store and to the back door, which he succeeded in opening just as the front door was burst in with a crash.

Dick gave utterance to a yell of defiance, and leaped out into the back yard.

He darted across the yard, leaped the fence and ran down the alley.

He knew it would not do to try to hide near the store, this time.

He must depend upon his fleetness of foot to get him out of the difficulty in which he had become involved.

Dick had not gone far before he realized that a crowd was in chase.

This did not worry him greatly.

He had been chased so often that he had become used to it.

Still he knew that there was considerable danger.

He might be headed off and surrounded.

Or he might slip and sprain an ankle.

There were plenty of things that could happen to cause him to be captured.

He realized this and was careful.

As luck would have it, the redcoats had not thought to try to head him off, for there were none of the enemy in sight when he reached the cross street.

Dick turned and darted down the street.

At the next street he turned again, and as it was a quiet street, with only an occasional light, he felt that he would be able to make good headway.

And he did make good headway.

He ran five or six blocks, without meeting a single person.

He paused and listened.

He could hear no sounds of pursuit.

"Well, I guess that I am in luck this time," thought Dick; "I have thrown them entirely off the track."

He went on up the street.

He proceeded at a leisurely pace.

There was no longer need of haste.

He was thinking.

He wondered what it would be best for him to do.

He decided to go to a tavern, secure a room, and then lay out a plan of procedure.

He realized that he had a hard task ahead of him.

His presence in the city was known.

Everybody would be on the lookout for him.

This would make it dangerous and difficult for him to do much in the way of spy work.

He was determined to stay until he had learned something of moment, however.

He had never failed in such work before, and he was not going to do so now.

He turned at the next corner and made his way across to the next street.

This was a business street.

It was well lighted and the shops were still open.

Dick pulled his hat down over his eyes and walked briskly along.

Presently he came to a tavern and entered.

The combined office and barroom was well filled with both citizens and soldiers of the king.

Dick saw that many looked at him curiously, but he maintained an outward air of composure, and approaching the landlord, asked if he could have a room for the night.

The landlord replied in the affirmative, and then, on Dick telling him that he wished to go at once to his room, the man called a boy and told him to conduct Dick to the room.

The boy did so, and when he was in his room, Dick sat down and began thinking the situation over.

While thus engaged he heard the sound of footsteps in the hall, but thought nothing of it.

The footsteps approached, closer and closer, and then suddenly the door of Dick's room opened and three British soldiers entered.

CHAPTER XII.

QUICK WORK.

Dick was taken by surprise.

He mentally chided himself for not having locked and bolted the door.

Had he done so he would have been spared this visit from the redcoats.

It was too late now, however, and Dick decided to make the best of the situation.

He rose to his feet, and, bowing, said:

"Good evening, gentlemen. To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit from you?"

The three eyed Dick, searchingly.

They seemed surprised to find him take matters so coolly.

Somehow they had thought the youth would look frightened when they appeared.

He did not seem to be at all frightened.

"Who are you?" asked one of the redcoats.

Dick simulated surprise.

"Who am I?" he remarked, in a wondering manner, as if surprised by the question.

"Yes; what is your name?"

"David Martin," replied Dick, promptly.

He had a new name with each change of clothes.

"David Martin, eh?"

"Yes."

"Where are you from?"

"From nowhere."

"You mean that you live here in Philadelphia?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts in Philadelphia do you live?"

"Oh, first one place, then another. I have no settled place of abode."

"Oh, that is it?"

"Yes."

"Why is it that you do this way?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"You will pardon me, I hope, if I state that I consider that as strictly my own business!" he said.

The redcoats frowned.

"You will do well not to talk and act too independently,"

said the leader, in a threatening voice; "we are not here to be trifled with!"

"Neither am I!" retorted Dick, seemingly not a whit abashed by the words of the redcoat.

The three hardly knew what to think of this.

They stared at the cool youth in a wondering and somewhat puzzled manner.

"See here; you are insolent!" cried the leader.

"Oh, no; I don't aim to be. You must remember, however, that I am in my own room, attending to my own business, while you three are intruders, who have no right in here, whatever."

"We may not have the right, but we have the might!"

Then the three chuckled.

They thought this was funny.

Dick's teeth came together firmly, and a dangerous glint appeared in his eyes.

"I am not so sure of that as you seem to be," he remarked, quietly.

This was another surprise for the intruders.

They looked at one another in amazement.

"Why, what chance would you stand against three of us?" the leader asked.

"It is impossible to say until the matter is put to a test," replied Dick. "But what do you want here, anyway? Please state your business and then withdraw, as I wish to go to bed."

"We can state our business, quick enough. We have come here for you!"

"What do you want with me?"

"We wish to take you to headquarters."

"To what headquarters?"

"To the headquarters of the British commander-in-chief, of course."

"Oh, that is what you want?"

"Yes."

"Why do you wish to take me there?"

"For the reason that we believe you are the rebel spy, Dick Slater, who, it is known, is in the city!"

Dick shook his head.

"You are making a mistake," he averred.

"You would say so, of course!" in a sneering tone.

"It is the truth. I am not the person you have mentioned."

"You will have to prove that to the commander-in-chief."

"You are determined to take me to headquarters, then?"

"We are."

Dick had no intention of permitting himself to be dragged off to British headquarters.

He had been talking to gain time.

He wished to take the redcoats at a disadvantage, if possible.

He was watching them closely and waiting for the opportunity which he was sure would come.

He decided that it was now time to act.

He suddenly leaped forward and dealt the spokesman of the party a blow which felled him as if he had been struck by a cannon-ball.

Out shot the youth's fists, first his right then his left.

Crack! Spat!

Down went the other two redcoats.

Then Dick picked the three up, one after another, and threw them out into the hall.

He closed the door, quickly, and locked and bolted it.

Then he went across to the window.

He raised the window and looked out.

He could see the ground, which was not more than sixteen feet distant.

Just then there came a crash against the door.

Angry voices, indulging in language more forcible than elegant, could be heard in the hall.

The redcoats had regained their feet and senses, and were trying to break the door down.

The way the door quivered and shook it looked as if the angry redcoats might succeed at any moment.

Dick felt that he had no time to spare.

He climbed carefully through the window and then lowered himself by his hands till he was extended at full length down the side of the house.

At this instant he heard a loud crash in the room he had just vacated.

The redcoats had burst the door open.

Dick let go his hold and dropped.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK FINDS A FRIEND.

Dick was jarred somewhat by the fall, but was not injured.

He did not lose his footing, and with a quick glance at the window, darted away.

Three faces appeared at the window at this instant.

They were the faces of the three disgusted and angry redcoats.

The latter caught sight of Dick, and a wild yellow rage went up.

They drew their pistols and fired, but they might

He had fired up into the air, for they did not stop to aim, and their bullets came nowhere near Dick.

He hastened onward, however, for he felt confident that the redcoats would make the attempt to follow him.

In this he was right.

Indeed, so eager were the redcoats to capture the youth that they took the chances of leaping out of the window.

Neither of the three were injured by the fall, and they hastened away in pursuit of the fugitive.

Dick heard them coming.

He understood what they had done.

"Well, well! They are more determined than I thought," he said to himself. "I don't think they can catch me, however. They haven't had as much practice in this sort of work as I have had," and the youth laughed in an amused manner.

Dick raced onward.

After him came the redcoats.

Dick had a good start.

He gradually increased his speed.

Seeing a party of redcoats ahead of him, Dick turned down a side street.

He continued on in this direction till he came to a lumber yard.

He knew by this that he was close to the wharf along the Delaware River frontage.

He paused and listened.

To his surprise he heard hurrying footsteps.

The redcoats were still on his trail.

Dick had thought that he had shaken his pursuers off, but he had evidently been mistaken.

They were coming and were not far off, either.

"Oh, well, I ought to be able to dodge them here in this lumber yard," he thought.

Then he darted forward and ran along between two great piles of lumber.

When Dick was about half way down this avenue he was startled by feeling a hand on his arm and then a voice said:

"This way; come with me!"

Dick paused and stood, hesitating.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A friend."

"How am I to know that?"

"Easy enough. You are being chased by redcoats, are you not?"

"I am; and they——"

"Well, I am an enemy to all redcoats, so must be your friend. Come, if you wish to escape your enemies."

Yielding to a sudden impulse, Dick followed the stranger.

He was conducted along a narrow alley between great piles of lumber.

They made a number of turns, Dick's companion seeming never at a loss to know which way to go, and presently he stopped and said:

"We will have to climb away. The ends of boards will serve as steps and you will have no difficulty in climbing up if you exercise care."

Dick's companion climbed up and then the youth followed.

He mounted a distance of fifteen feet, at least.

"Now you will have to crawl away," said the stranger; "follow me and have no fear. You may rest assured the redcoats will not be able to find you."

Dick felt sure they would not.

"Go ahead," he said, quietly; "I will follow."

He had made up his mind to see the adventure through to the finish.

He had a curiosity to know who his strange friend was.

The two crawled along a distance of thirty feet, Dick judged.

He felt above his head and found that there was a covering of lumber there.

"Now we will have to climb down again," said Dick's guide.

They climbed down a distance of a dozen feet or so, made their way along another narrow alley, then climbed up again and crawled a short distance on hands and knees.

"Now you can stand erect if you like," said Dick's guide; "there's no danger of bumping your head."

Dick rose to his feet.

"Now, wait just a moment," said the stranger; "stand where you are."

There was the noise of flint striking steel, and then a tiny blaze was seen.

At this little blaze Dick's companion lighted a candle, after which he extinguished the blaze itself by blowing it out.

By the light of the candle Dick was enabled to get a very good look at his surroundings.

He saw that he was in a room perhaps twelve feet square.

It was a strange room.

On every side was lumber—nothing but lumber, and over the top was lumber.

In fact, this strange room was simply a square space in the midst of the great pile of lumber.

Dick saw that this was the regular habitation of some one, for there were two or three stool-chairs, a rough table, and in one corner were blankets.

It was undoubtedly the home of his companion.

Dick now gave this companion a little of his attention. To his surprise he found that his strange friend was a youth of about his own age.

"Be seated," invited the youth.

Dick took a seat on one of the stools.

"Well, well!" he remarked; "this is a cozy nest."

The other smiled and looked pleased.

"I like it," he said; "and if you like it you shall remain here as long as you wish."

"But how do you know that I am a desirable person to have in here?" asked Dick.

The other smiled.

"Oh, I know who you are—or, at least, I think I do."

Dick looked surprised.

"Who am I?"

"You are Dick Slater, the patriot spy—are you not?"

Dick looked searchingly at the youth for a few moments.

"And if I were, would it be safe to acknowledge the fact to you?"

The youth nodded in a decided manner.

"It certainly would," he said; "I am a patriot—a patriot to the core—and that is the reason you find me occupying these quarters."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Dick. "I'm glad to know that you are a patriot. Yes, I am Dick Slater, as you have surmised."

"Good! I was sure of it. I heard that you were in the city, and when I saw you enter the lumber yard a few minutes ago, and knew you were being pursued, I jumped at once to the conclusion that you were Dick Slater. Shake hands; I am proud to know you."

Dick shook hands with the youth, and then asked:

"Who are you?"

"My name is Tom Farley, and I am an orphan; when the British took possession of the city I took up my quarters here and have lived here ever since."

"Well, Tom, I am as glad to know you as you are to know me," said Dick, heartily; "it does me good to know that I have even one friend in Philadelphia."

"Well, in me you certainly have a friend; and if there is anything I can do for you, you may be sure I will do it."

"Thank you. I don't know that there is anything in particular that you can do, Tom, other than to grant me permission to make your home my home while I am here. That will be a big favor."

"It is one I shall be glad to grant. You are more than welcome to stay here as long as you like."

This was very satisfactory to Dick.

He had had one experience of trying to get sleeping

quarters, and was glad to know he would not have to take risks in that way again.

He felt perfectly safe in this snug retreat.

Like Tom, he did not believe any one could find them out, even if they knew they were somewhere within the great pile of lumber and were to search for them.

Dick and Tom had a long conversation, and the youth learned much that would be of benefit to him in his work of trying to secure information.

Indeed, he was surprised to learn, when they had talked for an hour or more, and he thought he had learned all there was to know, that his new-found friend was chore-boy at the headquarters of General Howe, the British commander-in-chief.

This was news, indeed, and it opened up a world of possibilities for Dick.

"Great guns! why didn't you tell me this sooner, Tom?" he asked. "Now I shall be able to make plans which will enable me to get right into the home of the enemy's head man, and learn just what I wish to know!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S DARING SPY WORK.

Dick slept well that night, or the rest of the night, rather, for it was nearly midnight when he and Tom lay down.

Next morning he had another talk with Tom, and made arrangements for a scheme which he had concocted to be put through.

To this end he remained in the retreat all day, and did not venture out at all.

When Tom came to the retreat in the evening he told Dick that he had made arrangements so that the plan could be put through to a successful issue, he was sure.

The plan was a very simple one.

Dick was to go and take Tom's place during the evening.

Tom was usually kept at the British headquarters till ten o'clock, and Dick would go back after they had eaten supper, and work in Tom's place.

Tom had explained to the housekeeper that another boy would come, and the woman said it would be all right.

Of course, she supposed the "other boy" would be some boy friend who lived in Philadelphia.

Had she known that the boy in question would be the

most noted patriot spy in the patriot army she would have objected to having him take Tom's place, for she was a loyalist.

Tom had already posted Dick on what he would have to do, so he had no misgivings on that score.

All that Tom had to do was to run errands for the housekeeper, and these errands were in the main to the grocery stores and meat markets of the vicinity.

Bidding Tom good-by, Dick took his departure.

It was dark, and Dick made his way along the street without much fear of being seen and recognized.

His idea was that the British would think he had become frightened by his experiences the night before and had left the city.

In that case they would not be on the lookout for him, and he would not be in much danger of discovery.

He reached the headquarters building in safety, and reported for duty to the housekeeper.

The woman merely glanced at Dick, and then told him to go to the grocery store and get some groceries.

She handed him a list of the articles required, and Dick hurried away to do the errand.

He was back in a few minutes, and the woman nodded approvingly.

"That's right," she said; "don't be all night about a little thing like that. You are perter than Tom."

Dick was glad to know he was giving satisfaction, but hoped he would not make Tom's lot harder by outdoing him in alertness.

Dick soon learned that the British commander-in-chief was to give a banquet to a lot of the officers of his staff.

It was on account of this fact that so many groceries, etc., were needed.

Dick was kept busy for an hour, and then he got a chance to rest.

"Do you suppose you could help wait on the table?" asked the housekeeper.

Dick shook his head.

"No, I couldn't do that," he replied. "I don't know anything about such work."

The fact was that Dick did not dare show himself in the dining room.

General Howe and a number of the officers knew Dick, and would recognize him on sight.

The housekeeper did not insist.

"Very well," she said; "if you think you couldn't do it, it is all right."

Dick drew a breath of relief.

Dick did not wish to wait upon the table at the banquet.

but he made up his mind to be close at hand, just the same.

He was a youth of experience, and knew that the commander-in-chief and his officers would discuss their plans during the progress of the banquet.

The wines which they would imbibe would loosen their tongues, and they would talk fully and freely.

If he could find some vantage point from which he could hear what was said by the officers Dick was sure he would learn a great deal that would be of interest and value to General Washington.

Dick occupied himself during his leisure moments in reconnoitering the dining room.

Dick soon decided that there was only one point from which it would be possible for him to hear everything that was said, and yet remain in concealment.

This was a closet at the farther side of the dining room.

It would be dangerous for him to conceal himself in the closet, as he would be liable to be discovered at any time.

But Dick was determined to risk it.

He might remain in Philadelphia a month and not have another such opportunity of securing information regarding the plans and intentions of the British.

Dick found out from the housekeeper the time when the officers would take their places at the table, and waiting till it lacked only about fifteen minutes of this time, Dick seized upon a favorable opportunity when the dining room was empty, and slipping into the room entered the closet.

He pulled the door to just in time, for a couple of waiters entered at that moment.

"That was a narrow escape," thought Dick. "Well, a miss is as good as a mile."

A few minutes later Dick heard the housekeeper calling him.

The woman even came into the dining room and asked the waiters if they had seen anything of the chore boy, and the waiters replied that they had not.

"Where can the young rascal be, I wonder?" the woman exclaimed. "He's just like Tom, always missing when he's wanted."

Dick did not hear the woman call for him any more, so judged that the matter had not been of much importance.

A few minutes later the British officers entered the dining room and took seats at the table.

There was a keyhole in the closet door, and peering through this, Dick found that he had a view of the faces of three officers and the backs of two others.

One of the officers whose face was visible was General Howe.

Dick had come in contact with the commander-in-chief of the British army several times, and knew him well.

At first the officers talked moderately on ordinary topics; after the wine began to flow the conversation became livelier and voices louder.

The conversation turned upon military matters, and this was pleasing to Dick.

The plans of the British were discussed freely and unreservedly.

General Howe had undoubtedly given this banquet for the purpose of getting his staff officers all together, and finding out their views regarding what was best to be done.

As may be believed, Dick listened to the conversation with interest.

He congratulated himself on his good fortune in getting the chance to be present and hear the plans discussed.

So interested was he that he forgot that he was in a dangerous position.

He was suddenly made to realize this fact, however.

The officers disposed of so much wine that the supply had run short, and General Howe ordered one of the waiters to bring a fresh supply.

"Yes, your excellency," said the waiter addressed, and Dick, who was looking through the keyhole, saw the man turn and come toward the closet.

A sudden chill went over Dick.

He remembered now that he had noticed a lot of wine bottles on a shelf above his head as he entered the closet.

This was undoubtedly a reserve stock which had been brought up from the cellar and placed in the closet so as to have it handy.

"Great guns!" thought Dick; "he is going to open the closet door, and I will be discovered!"

The next instant the waiter opened the door, and as his eyes fell upon Dick he leaped backward with a cry of mingled amazement and fright.

The waiter's cry attracted the attention of all the officers, and as their eyes fell upon Dick they gave utterance to cries of anger and amazement, and leaped to their feet.

"A spy!" bellowed General Howe, his red face growing redder still.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK'S DARING ESCAPE.

All this had taken place in an instant of time, almost.

Dick realizing that he was in a very dangerous position, acted at once.

He thought that by taking the officers by surprise he might succeed in escaping from the room, and once out of the room he believed he would have no difficulty in getting safely out of the house.

Dick made a sudden dash, as if to go around the end of the table.

The officers near that end of the table leaped to their feet, however, and barred Dick's way.

And now Dick played a trick upon the officers which caused them to open their eyes in amazement.

Dick was a wonderful athlete.

His training in this line stood him in good stead now.

Swerving to the left, Dick suddenly leaped into the air.

To the amazement of the spectators, the youth cleared the dinner table with the greatest of ease, and alighting on the other side, made a dash for the door.

The door was closed.

This would make it necessary for the youth to stop for an instant, at least.

The officers recovered from their amazement at Dick's wonderful feat, just as he reached the door.

They leaped forward, in an attempt to seize the youth.

Dick grasped the knob, and turning it gave a jerk.

The door came open, and Dick leaped through and ran along the hall.

The officers came rushing out in pursuit.

The housekeeper saw Dick coming with the officers after him, and screamed.

She wondered what Dick had done.

Of course she had no suspicion that he was the noted patriot spy, Dick Slater.

Dick entered the kitchen, bounded across it, opened the door, and leaping out into the night, ran with all his might.

After him rushed the officers.

They were just exhilarated sufficiently by the wine they had imbibed to make them ambitious.

They wished to capture the daring youth who had played the spy with such success.

If they could capture him, it would be a big triumph.

Somehow, they seemed to understand that the youth was Dick Slater.

To Dick's surprise, he found that the officers were pretty good runners.

Two or three of them were more than good runners.

They were excellent runners.

They were holding their own with Dick.

Then, too, the yells to which all were giving utterance

was attracting attention, which was anything but pleasing to Dick.

Soldiers came running from all directions.

Suddenly Dick found his way barred by a party of half a dozen redcoats.

There was no time, and, indeed, no chance to evade the enemy.

It was go through with a rush, or submit to capture.

Dick decided to go through.

He increased his speed, and struck the center of the party of soldiers with all the force and precision of a center rush in a football game of to-day.

Dick's head struck one of the redcoats in the stomach, doubling the fellow up like a jack-knife.

This man went down, and carried another with him.

Dick struck out blindly with both fists, and as luck would have it, succeeded in landing on the faces of two more of the enemy.

The two were sent staggering, but did not fall.

Dick's purpose had been accomplished, however.

He had broken through the ranks of the redcoats.

Before the two or three who had escaped damage could lay hold of him, Dick was again speeding down the street.

He ran at his best speed.

The officers, reinforced now by the common soldiers, kept up the pursuit.

Dick saw he was in for a hard race.

His pursuers were wild to capture him.

He had caused them so much trouble that they would do their utmost to capture him.

He did not believe they could succeed, however.

He felt that he was more than a match for his pursuers.

He ran onward at the top of his speed.

He headed toward the river front.

A few minutes later he reached the lumber yard.

He darted in between the great piles of lumber.

When he reached the point where the little alley led into the heart of the great lumber pile, Dick turned aside and entered.

He knew the route well, now, and had no difficulty in reaching the peculiar room in which his friend Tom had taken up his abode.

Tom was awake, and welcomed Dick.

"How did you make out?" he asked eagerly, as soon as Dick appeared.

Dick placed his finger to his lips.

"Sh!" he cautioned. "I am followed."

Tom looked surprised.

"You are followed?" he remarked in a low voice.

"Yes; by redcoats."

"What happened? How did they discover who you were?"

Dick told Tom the story in as few words as possible.

"Jove!" said Tom, when Dick had finished. "I won't dare go back to work at British headquarters after this, will I?"

"Hardly! You would be charged with aiding and abetting me, and the probabilities are that you would be shot. I am sorry it happened so, Tom, but I couldn't help it."

"Oh, that is all right; I can find work somewhere else. I am willing to lose my place, if by so doing I can aid the cause of liberty."

"Good for you, Tom! But I am afraid it will be dangerous for you to even remain in Philadelphia after this."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; they will blame you for to-night's work almost as much as they do me, and will be on the lookout for you."

Tom looked sober.

"I guess you are right," he said presently.

"I know I am, Tom; and what will you do?"

Tom shook his head.

"That is more than I know," he replied, in a somewhat doleful voice.

"I'll tell you what to do," said Dick, after a moment's thought; "come with me, and join my company of 'Liberty Boys!'"

Tom's face brightened.

He held out his hand to Dick.

"Say, I'll do it!" he exclaimed. "There is nothing here in Philadelphia to hold me, and I believe I shall like to enter the army and fight for liberty."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick, in a tone of satisfaction. "I am sure you will like it, Tom. And if you go with me, I shall not feel as if I had caused you to lose your chance to make a living."

"Listen!" exclaimed Tom, at this moment.

He spoke in a low, cautious tone, of course.

Both listened intently.

They heard voices, and the sound of footsteps.

"Somebody is coming!" whispered Tom. "The redcoats have discovered the secret passage leading to this place!"

"You are right!" whispered Dick. "I guess it is all up with us!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLIGHT OF DICK AND TOM.

"Perhaps not," said Tom, in a low tone.

As he spoke he blew out the light.

Then he said, in a whisper:

"Come with me!"

Dick followed Tom to the farther side of the room.

He heard his companion fumbling around, and then heard a sliding noise.

"I have slipped a board back, and there is room to crawl through," explained Tom. "Follow me."

"All right; go ahead, Tom."

Dick heard the sound of voices and footsteps coming closer and closer.

He realized that it was necessary that he should lose no time in getting out of the retreat.

Tom had succeeded in getting out, and now Dick hastened to follow suit.

Dick glanced around him.

He could not see much, but realized that they were on the top of the gigantic lumber pile.

Tom slipped the board back into place and then as quickly and quietly as possible piled a number of boards on top of it.

"There," he breathed, "I think the redcoats will have a hard time getting up through."

Then he took Dick by the arm and led the way across the top of the lumber piles.

Presently they came to the end of it.

"We will have to get down here," said Tom; "it will be rather a difficult feat, but I think we can accomplish it. It is twenty feet to the ground and all we have in the way of steps is the projecting ends of boards which are longer than their fellows."

"All right; you go ahead, Tom, I'll follow."

"Very well; be careful and don't fall, Dick."

"I'll be careful."

Of course, the youths spoke in whispers.

For all they knew, there might be redcoats right below them.

Tom went first.

He climbed down slowly and carefully.

Dick followed closely.

Tom reached the ground in safety.

He had just done so and stepped to one side, when Dick lost his footing and fell.

Luckily he fell only six or seven feet, so was not injured.

"Hurt you, Dick?" asked Tom, in a low but solicitous voice.

"Not a bit, Tom," was the reply.

As he spoke Dick leaped to his feet.

At the same instant the dark forms of several men were seen coming forth from the dark avenue leading through the lumber yard.

They were evidently redcoats and had as evidently heard the noise made when Dick fell.

There was only one thing to do.

That was to get away from there with all possible speed.

The youths darted away.

They ran with all their might, keeping within the dark shadows cast by the great piles of lumber as much as was possible.

The redcoats heard the youths' footsteps, however, and possibly they may have even caught sight of the youths.

At any rate, the redcoats set out in pursuit of the youths.

They gave utterance to wild yells.

Doubtless the yells were intended to apprise their comrades of the fact that they had sighted the game.

"Are you a pretty good runner, Tom?" asked Dick.

"Pretty fair."

"Well, if you can keep up with me I think we will be all right. I have yet to find the first redcoat who can beat me running."

"You go ahead, Dick, and set the pace."

"No, you go ahead at your best speed, Tom, and I'll keep right along with you."

"Very well."

The youths sped onward.

Tom soon proved that he was more than a fair runner; he was a fine runner.

He gave Dick about all he wanted to do.

The youth said to himself that he could not have gone much faster if he had wanted to.

This suited him exactly.

He did not believe it possible that the redcoats could catch them.

Onward the youths ran.

After them came the redcoats.

It was a lively chase.

It was the first one of the kind that Tom had ever engaged in.

He was cool, however.

Whenever Dick spoke to him he answered promptly, and did not seem to be greatly flustered.

Dick noticed this.

He thought it good proof that his young friend was brave.

"He will make a worthy addition to the ranks of the 'Liberty Boys,'" was Dick's thought.

New recruits joined the ranks of the pursuers every few minutes, but although it increased the odds against the youths, in case they were overtaken, it did not increase the chances of their being overtaken.

There came to be such a crowd, in fact, that the men

got in one another's way, and thus their speed was retarded.

This, of course, was to the advantage of the fugitives, and they drew farther and farther away from their pursuers.

Presently they reached the outskirts of the city and were soon making their way along a country road.

Dick took the lead, now, and as they could hear no sounds to indicate that they were being pursued, they slackened their speed to a walk.

Half a mile from the edge of the city Dick led the way into the timber.

"I left a horse in here yesterday evening," Dick explained; "I don't know whether I will find him here or not, but will look, anyway."

He soon reached the spot where he had left his horse, and found the animal there.

The horse was glad to see his human friends, and neighed to let them know that this was the case.

"He must be nearly starved," said Dick; "you see, I expected to come back sooner."

He untied the horse and led him back to the road.

"Get into the saddle, Tom," said Dick, "and then I'll get up behind you. He'll carry both of us, and we will only have to go three or four miles before finding a place where we can get feed and water for the horse."

Tom mounted, and Dick climbed up behind him.

Then they rode onward at a brisk gait.

The horse was a large, strong one, and seemed to understand that the better time he made the quicker he would get something to eat.

Not more than three-quarters of an hour had passed when the cabin of Martin Murray, in the timber bordering the Schuylkill River, was reached.

It was late, but Dick quickly got Murray up.

When he appeared at the door and learned that one of the two was Dick Slater, the patriot spy, who had stopped at his house that evening, and who had put the redcoats to flight, he gave the youth a warm welcome.

The horse was taken to the stable and was given water and feed.

Then the three returned to the cabin to find Mrs. Murray and her daughter Mabel up and dressed.

Dick introduced Tom, and then told some of his adventures in Philadelphia.

Mr. Murray wished the youths to remain all night, but Dick told him that the redcoats might give chase, and in that case it would be best for all concerned if he and his comrade were far away.

The youths remained at the cabin an hour, and then

Dick and Tom bade Mrs. Murray and Mabel good-by, and, accompanied by Mr. Murray, went to the stable to get the horse.

"Seems ter me that two fellers is mos' too heavy fur one hoss," said Mr. Murray; "an' I kin he'p ye out, fur I foun' er hoss in ther timber ter-day. He is er leetle bit lame in ther shoulder, but ye kin git 'im erlong all right, I think."

"Lame in the shoulder, you say?" exclaimed Dick. "Then it is my horse, I'll wager!"

Then he told of how his horse had gone lame in the shoulder, the afternoon before, when the redcoats were in chase, and how he had abandoned the animal.

Sure enough, it was Dick's horse, and Dick thanked Mr. Murray for returning the animal to him.

Then Dick and Tom shook hands with the man, bade him good-by, and, mounting, rode away.

They had gone not more than a mile when they heard the sound of hoofbeats behind them.

"We are pursued!" exclaimed Dick. "The redcoats are after us!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"FORWARD!"

There was little doubt of the truth of Dick's statement.

There would not likely be any one else abroad at this time of the night.

Dick's idea was that the redcoats had suspected that he would start back to Valley Forge and had procured horses and followed.

"What shall we do?" asked Tom. "Give them a race?"

"It would be useless," replied Dick; "my horse is so lame he could not hold his own with the horses of our pursuers."

"That's so; I had forgotten that."

"The simplest and easiest way will be to avoid them," said Dick. "We will ride into the timber at the side of the road and conceal ourselves, then our pursuers will pass us."

"That is a good idea, Dick; it ought to succeed."

"I think so. Come; the quicker we get into the timber, the better."

Dick turned his horse aside and rode into the timber, Tom following closely.

Leaping to the ground they led their horses still deeper into the woods.

When they were fifty yards from the road they paused.

"I think this is far enough," said Dick.

The two stood still and listened.

The sound of the hoofbeats came closer and closer.

Dick judged there was a party of ten or a dozen redcoats.

When the party came opposite where Dick and Tom were concealed the hoofbeats suddenly ceased.

"What does that mean?" whispered Tom. "Surely they cannot know that we are here."

"I don't think so, Tom. Hold my horse while I go and investigate."

Dick made his way quickly but silently toward the spot where the horseman had come to a stop.

As he drew near he could hear the sounds of voices.

He kept on till he reached the extreme edge of the timber where it bordered the road.

Here he took up a position behind a large tree and listened.

It was a party of redcoats, sure enough.

Dick quickly learned this.

The redcoats were holding a council, trying to decide whether to go on or turn back.

A few seemed to think they stood a chance of catching the fugitives by continuing on, but the majority thought differently.

After considerable discussion it was decided to turn back.

The decision gave Dick considerable satisfaction.

That was what he wished the redcoats to do.

The redcoats were on the point of turning and starting on the back track when a shrill neigh broke the night's stillness.

The neigh came from back in the timber.

"Great guns! that is bad," thought Dick; "that was one of our horses, and the redcoats will suspect that we are in hiding here."

Dick's prophecy proved correct.

As the sound of the neigh was heard, exclamations of amazement escaped the lips of the redcoats.

"What was that?"

"I'll wager our quarry is hidden in the timber near here."

"You are right; and we'll rout the scoundrels out."

"Tie your horses and come along, everybody!"

Dick hastened back to where he had left Tom and the horses.

"We must get away from here, and in a hurry, too, Tom," he said. "Come!"

He took his horse's bridle rein and led the way.

He moved westward in a direction parallel with the road.

The redcoats were making their way into the timber and spreading out, fan-shape, as they advanced; but Dick

and Tom succeeded in getting around the end of the line without being detected, and presently reached the road.

Mounting, they rode onward toward the west.

They did not dare go faster than a walk, for fear the redcoats would hear the sound of the hoofbeats and be apprised of what was going on.

Dick did not much fear pursuit, however, and in this he was right.

The redcoats put in fifteen or twenty minutes searching in the timber, and not finding the fugitives, they gave it up and made their way back to the road.

Mounting, they rode away on the back track.

Dick and Tom rode onward and reached Valley Forge.

It was about four o'clock when they reached the patriot encampment, and they were soon in the "Liberty Boys' " quarters.

Throwing themselves down upon a blanket in one corner, the weary youths were asleep in an instant.

They were up as early as any of the youths, however, and Dick introduced Tom as a new recruit.

The "Liberty Boys" gave Tom a cordial greeting and quickly made him feel at home.

While eating breakfast, Dick told his adventures, and as soon as the meal was ended he hastened to headquarters to make his report to the commander-in-chief.

General Washington greeted Dick pleasantly, even eagerly.

"I am indeed glad to see you, Dick," he said. "What success did you have?"

"Very good success, your excellency; I think that I learned all that was necessary. I played spy at a banquet given by General Howe to the officers of his staff last night, and heard them discuss their plans.

"Good!" exclaimed General Washington. "And what did you learn?"

Dick told General Washington in as few words as possible, just what he had learned.

The commander-in-chief rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"The information which you bring is indeed important, Dick," said the commander-in-chief, when the youth had finished; "now that I know General Howe does not intend making an attack, I shall know just what to do. It will leave me free to push my plans for recruiting the army and teaching the men thus recruited something of military tactics and the art of war."

After some further conversation Dick rose to depart, but before doing so he asked to be permitted to take his "Liberty Boys" and go out and make an attempt to get a chance at some of the small bands of redcoats which had

been committing depredations within a few miles of Valley Forge.

These parties of redcoats had, within the past week or so, succeeded in cutting off and routing two or three small foraging parties of patriot soldiers.

"I would like to beat them at their own game," said Dick; "and if I can get a fair chance, I believe we can do it."

"I believe so, too, Dick; and you have my permission to go ahead with the work. All I ask is that you will be careful and not take too great chances."

"I will be careful, your excellency,"

Then Dick saluted and withdrew.

He hastened back to the "Liberty Boys' " quarters.

When he told the youths what he was going to do, they were delighted.

They were eager to be away at once.

As Dick was just as eager as any of them, he told them to get ready.

They hastened to do so.

An hour later they rode out of the encampment, going in an easterly direction.

Tom Farley was with them, and he was not a little excited.

He was going upon his first campaign.

The others, however, were all veterans, and they did not seem to be the least bit excited.

They laughed and joked and sang snatches of songs.

Indeed, to Tom's way of thinking they acted more like a gang of youths going on a lark than soldiers going in search of an enemy for the purpose of engaging said enemy in a battle to the death.

Tom had often heard of "The Liberty Boys of '76."

He had heard wonderful stories regarding their valor, their desperate daring in battle, and he wondered if it could be true that these laughing, joking, jolly youths could be the fighters it was claimed they were.

Tom was soon to learn that the truth had not half been told.

He was soon to learn that those who are jolly and lively, and seemingly careless under ordinary circumstances, are the most dangerous when it comes to real trouble.

The youths were riding along through the timber, a couple of hours later, and were still laughing and joking and having a good time.

The road crooked and turned, and suddenly, on making one of these turns, the "Liberty Boys" came in sight of a band of redcoats which was about a quarter of a mile distant, and coming toward them.

Instantly Tom saw a transformation scene which he never forgot.

The "Liberty Boys" suddenly stopped laughing and joking.

A stern look came over their faces.

As Dick drew his sword, the youths drew their pistols.

"Forward!" shouted Dick, waving his sword in the air.

"Charge the scoundrels!"

A wild cheer went up from the "Liberty Boys," and putting spurs to their horses they rode forward with the resistless fury of an avalanche.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUEL.

There were about seventy-five of the redcoats.

There were nearly a hundred of the "Liberty Boys."

The captain of the band of redcoats saw that his men were outnumbered, but did not deem the odds sufficiently against him to warrant his men in fleeing.

He decided to give battle, and waving his sword above his head and yelling to his men to follow, he urged his horse forward at a gallop.

The shock when the two forces came together was terrific.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! wen the pistols.

Yells and groans went up from the combatants.

The "Liberty Boys" were too strong for the redcoats, and hurled them back.

The redcoats stood their ground as best they could for a few moments, and then finding that they were getting the worst of it, they turned and fled, followed by many of the "Liberty Boys."

When the two parties first came together Dick and the redcoat captain met and engaged each other in combat.

It was a desperate duel that now took place between Dick and the redcoat.

Both were determined to win.

They were armed with sabers, so there was no advantage in weapons.

It was a fair fight.

True, the redcoats had fled and half a dozen of the "Liberty Boys" who had remained behind could have interfered, and would have had a perfect right to do so, but they knew Dick would not approve of their doing so, so they sat quietly in their saddles and watched the combat.

They had every faith in the ability of Dick to win.

They could not conceive of him losing the fight.

It was soon made evident, however, that in the British captain Dick had found a foeman worthy of his best efforts.

The redcoat was an expert swordsman.

Dick was, also, and this made it a duel well worth seeing.

Clash! Clash!

The sabres described intricate movements in the air with lightning-like quickness.

It was impossible for the eye to follow their movements.

Clash! Clash! Clash!

Hotter grew the combat.

It seemed to be about an even thing between the two.

Try as they would, neither seemed to be able to damage the other.

Both were perfect in defensive work, and neither seemed to have any advantage over the other in offensive work.

Clash! Clash! Clash!

The two were very well matched.

For three or four minutes the combat went on.

Each kept maneuvering and pulling his horse this way and that, in an attempt to get his opponent at a disadvantage, and presently Dick succeeded.

Suddenly he got the chance he had been looking for, and with a quick, powerful blow knocked the redcoat's saber out of his hand.

By all the rules of war, Dick had a perfect right to take the redcoat's life, but he had no idea of doing such a thing.

The British captain was too brave a man, and had put up too gallant a fight to permit of his being put to death in such a manner.

There was a look of disappointment, but not of fear, on the British captain's face as he looked at Dick and said:

"You have won. My life is at your mercy."

One of the "Liberty Boys" had leaped to the ground and picked up the captain's saber.

He handed it to Dick, who in turn extended it toward the captain.

"There is your saber, sir. Take it," he said.

The British officer looked surprised.

Then he shook his head.

"No," he said. "You defeated me fairly; my life is yours, and I have nothing to say."

"Take your saber," said Dick; "take it and go. You are a brave man, and shall have your liberty."

The captain's face lighted up.

"Thank you," he said, accepting the saber. "And now

that you have granted me this great favor, I am emboldened to ask another of you."

"Ask it."

"It is that you will withdraw your men, whom I see coming yonder, so that my men may return and take care of our dead and wounded."

"Your request is granted," said Dick promptly.

The "Liberty Boys" soon reached the spot, and as soon as they had taken up the two or three youths who had been wounded they rode on down the road in accordance with Dick's orders.

Then Dick and the British captain saluted each other, and turning their horses rode in opposite directions.

The British officer soon came in sight of his men, and signaled for them to return.

They rode back, and when they reached him he explained the situation.

They then rode back to where the engagement had taken place.

After giving burial to their dead comrades, they mounted the wounded on their horses and rode slowly away in the direction of Philadelphia.

They had had all the fight they wanted for one day.

They had been beaten at their own game.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FIERCE CHARGE.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" rode back up the road a mile, and stopped in front of a farmhouse.

They had been very fortunate in the engagement with the redcoats.

Not one of the "Liberty Boys" had been killed, and only three seriously wounded.

Several more had been slightly wounded, but this with the "Liberty Boys" did not count.

It took a pretty serious wound before one of those brave youths would give up and drop out of the ranks.

Dick leaped off his horse, and going to the farmhouse, knocked on the door.

It was opened by a woman.

Dick explained the situation, and asked the woman if he might leave the wounded men in her house.

She said that they might.

Her husband was away, but the woman said that she thought he would be willing for the wounded men to be left there.

The "Liberty Boys" at once conducted their wounded comrades into the house, and saw them comfortably situated, and then they took their departure.

Dick was eager to strike another blow at the redcoats that day if possible.

They rode back down the road in the direction from which they had just come.

They rode six or eight miles, and once from the top of a high hill they caught sight of the party of redcoats with whom they had their encounter.

Dick had no intention of attacking this party, however.

The "Liberty Boys" had already thrashed them once, and he did not think it would be fair or right to attack the redcoats a second time.

Dick was in search of another party, and if he could find it, then there would be a battle.

They rode hither and thither, and about one o'clock they came upon another party of redcoats.

The latter were engaged in helping themselves to everything in the way of provisions that they could find about a farmhouse which stood just at the edge of the prairie.

Dick gave the word, and the "Liberty Boys" rode forward at a gallop, giving vent to wild cheers as they did so.

This was a small party of redcoats, and seeing that they would not have time to reach their horses, the British soldiers took to their heels and ran toward the timber with all their might.

The "Liberty Boys" fired a couple of volleys, but the redcoats were at such a distance that no one was killed, though doubtless a few of them were wounded.

As the youths had had no dinner, they decided to stop here and get something to eat.

The farmer, grateful to the "Liberty Boys" for driving the redcoats away, was only too glad to give them all the food they could eat.

The youths remained there a couple of hours, but the frightened redcoats did not return.

Dick confiscated their horses, twelve in number, and then the "Liberty Boys" rode onward.

Dick hoped to find at least one more band of redcoats before nightfall.

He was not disappointed.

He not only found one band of redcoats, but two.

Perhaps it might be more proper to say that the two bands of redcoats found the "Liberty Boys."

The youths had ridden down into a little valley, and were at the center when a band of redcoats appeared on top of the hill at the farthest side of the valley.

At the same time, another party rode into view from the right-hand side.

Had the "Liberty Boys" gone two hundred yards farther before the redcoat bands put in an appearance they would have been in a trap.

In the two parties of redcoats there were at least three hundred men.

Seeing that they outnumbered Dick's party, the redcoats rushed forward to the attack.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" retreated to the top of the hill on one side of the valley, and took up their position among some trees which grew there.

The redcoats, confident that their superiority of force would give them an easy victory, charged up the hill without hesitation.

They were soon to learn their mistake, however.

Dick waited till the enemy was within fifty yards, and then he gave the order for the youths to take aim.

The youths obeyed.

Onward came the redcoats.

They were within one hundred feet now, and Dick gave the command:

"Fire!"

Crash! Roar!

The volley rang out, and was followed by a cheer from the "Liberty Boys."

Considerable damage was done, Dick knew, for the British faltered, paused and stood seemingly irresolute.

And now again it was evidenced that Dick possessed all the qualities which go to make up the successful general.

He saw his chance, and decided to take it.

He believed that a sudden, fierce charge would suffice to put the redcoats to flight.

He decided to put the matter to the test, at any rate. Drawing his sword, Dick waved it in the air, and cried out in a loud, commanding voice:

"Charge, Liberty Boys! Forward, and show them how Americans can fight!"

The "Liberty Boys" leaped to their feet, and gave utterance to their battle-cry:

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!"

Then they dashed down the hillside straight toward the redcoats.

CHAPTER XX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS' " TRIUMPH.

Although the redcoats outnumbered the "Liberty Boys" three to one, the fact that the latter had the advantage of position, overcame this odds.

Then, too, what the "Liberty Boys" lacked in numbers they made up in fierceness and desperation.

They fought like demons.

The redcoats had never seen anything like it.

They tried to stand their ground, but could not.

The result was that after a very few moments of fighting the redcoats broke and fled.

The "Liberty Boys" pursued them down the hill, and half way across the little valley.

Then Dick called a halt.

Perhaps Dick had never heard the saying, "Build a bridge of gold for a flying enemy," but he had a thorough understanding of the idea expressed by this saying.

He had known of instances where one party had pursued another too closely and too long, and said party had turned in desperation and given the erstwhile pursuing party a sound thrashing.

He felt that it might be so in their case if they pushed the redcoats too closely.

The enemy was certainly strong enough to defeat Dick's party if it should take a notion to do so.

Dick understood that he had caught the redcoats at just the proper moment and had managed to rout them by causing a panic among them.

The "Liberty Boys" hastened back up to the top of the hill where they had left their horses.

Not wishing to leave the spot at once, for fear the redcoats would think they were running away, Dick and his comrades remained where they were for nearly an hour.

At the end of that time, having seen nothing further of the redcoats, Dick ordered the "Liberty Boys" to mount their horses.

They did so, and the party rode back down the road in the direction from which they had come.

Dick had not been willing to venture on in the direction they had been going for fear they might run into an ambush.

He figured that they had done enough for one day, anyhow.

They had put three parties of redcoats to rout—had beaten them at their own game, and all the "Liberty Boys" were happy.

This statement needs no qualification, for even the wounded "Liberty Boys" were happy.

They were wounded, true; and some of them were suffering considerable pain, but were not their enemies worse wounded and suffering greater pain than they?

The youths answered this question with a decided "yes," and so were happy.

Dick had hoped to be able to reach the house where they

had left the three seriously wounded "Liberty Boys," before night, but the darkness came on while yet they were six or eight miles distant from the house.

Dick decided to go into camp.

Picking out a nice place near a stream of water, Dick ordered a halt.

The "Liberty Boys" dismounted, tethered their horses and built camp-fires.

They had some cold meat and bread in their saddle-bags, and after eating supper and spending an hour talking and telling stories, they rolled themselves in their blankets and went to sleep—with the exception of six sentinels, who had been stationed in a circle around the camp to prevent a surprise.

Dick lay down with the rest, but for some reason he could not sleep.

He dozed two or three times, but each time he aroused with a start.

He kept this up until nearly midnight, and then finding he could not sleep he arose and walked away from the encampment.

Bob was on guard at the point where Dick left the camp, and the youth paused and exchanged a few words with Bob.

"I don't know what's the matter with me, old man," he said; "I've been trying to get to sleep, but could not succeed. I guess I'll take a walk up the road a ways; perhaps I'll be sleepy when I get back."

Dick walked slowly up the road.

It was a gradual slope upward till the top of a hill was reached, a quarter of a mile distant.

When Dick reached the top of the hill he paused and stood for some time looking ahead into the darkness.

Suddenly he thought he heard footsteps, and acting on the impulse of the moment he glided in behind some bushes growing beside the road and stood there, waiting and listening.

He was not mistaken.

He had heard footsteps.

A dark form appeared close at hand.

It came from the direction of the camp of the "Liberty Boys."

"Jove! can it be a spy?" thought Dick.

He decided that it must be that the man was a spy.

Were there redcoats in the vicinity? the youth wondered.

He made up his mind to satisfy himself on both scores.

When the man had passed, Dick stepped out behind him and followed.

He moved with all the stealthiness of an Indian on the trail of a foe.

Dick was an expert at such work as this.

It gave him a great advantage over the British spies, as he could go places without detection, when a redcoat would have betrayed his presence at once by some noise.

Onward down the hill moved the man, and behind him was Dick.

The pursuit led the youth a distance of nearly a mile.

Then the man whom he was following turned aside and entered the timber.

He went but a short distance before coming upon a camp in an opening in the forest.

A sentinel challenged the man Dick had been trailing, and he said something and was allowed to pass on.

Dick paused and watched and listened.

He saw the man rouse up some of the sleeping men.

By the faint light of the camp-fires, now almost out, Dick saw that the men were redcoats.

Dick could hear the spy's voice as he talked rapidly to the other men.

"He is telling them he has discovered our encampment," thought Dick.

When the spy had ceased talking, the work of arousing the camp was begun.

Dick knew what this meant.

The redcoats were going to make an attack on the "Liberty Boys."

Turning, he stole silently away.

He moved cautiously till he reached the road and then he leaped forward and ran with all his might.

He ran every step of the way back to the "Liberty Boys" encampment.

"What's the matter, Dick?" asked Bob, in surprise.

"Danger for us, Bob! There is a large force of redcoats over on the other side of the hill, and they are coming to attack us!"

"You don't mean it, Dick?"

"Yes, I do. I have just come from there, and they are getting ready to come over here."

Dick and Bob hastened to the encampment, and proceeded to arouse the sleeping youths.

When the "Liberty Boys" learned that a large party of redcoats were coming to attack them, they were surprised, but not alarmed.

They quickly rolled up their blankets, and as soon as all were ready, they left the spot.

They led their horses a quarter of a mile down the road, and tied them.

"Now, then, we will go back," said Dick. "By hiding near the spot where we were just camped we may be able

to take the redcoats by surprise when they put in an appearance.

The youths hastened back up the road, and succeeded in reaching the vicinity of their late camp before the redcoats got there.

They concealed themselves near at hand, and, musket in hand, awaited the coming of the enemy.

Perhaps ten minutes elapsed.

Then suddenly the redcoats came rushing out from among the trees at the opposite side of the little opening.

The light was not very good, and the redcoats had not discovered that their intended victims had disappeared.

When they reached the heart of the clearing and discovered that their intended victims had flown, the redcoats paused suddenly, and gave exclamations of anger and disappointment.

At this instant Dick gave the order to fire.

Crash! Roar!

The sound made by the hundred musket shots was almost deafening.

The volley created havoc in the ranks of the redcoats.

Quite a number of their men fell dead and wounded.

Yells, groans and curses went up from the redcoats.

They were taken wholly by surprise, and for a few moments stood there as if dazed.

Dick seized upon the moment for a grand stroke.

"Charge bayonets!" he cried. "Kill the scoundrels! Let's not leave a single one of them alive!"

The "Liberty Boys" rushed out from among the trees, and charged upon the redcoats with fixed bayonets.

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!" they cried.

This was too much for the redcoats.

Their nerves had already received a terrible shock.

Giving utterance to wild yells of fear, the redcoats turned and fled as if the Old Nick was after them.

It was a great triumph for the "Liberty Boys."

They had beaten the redcoats at their own game.

THE END.

The next number (52) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' SCARE; OR, A MISS AS GOOD AS A MILE," by Harry Moore.

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